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UNCLAS LILONGWE 000411

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MORE ATTACKS ON MUTHARIKA'S CREDIBILITY

REF: A. 03 LILONGWE 1202

[B](#). LILONGWE 404

[C](#). LILONGWE 392

1. (U) "The Nation" daily newspaper published a front-page story on May 17 questioning the authenticity of United Democratic Front (UDF) presidential candidate Bingu wa Mutharika's doctoral degree. In a carefully constructed article, the newspaper points out that Mutharika's CV does not list the dates when he attended Pacific Western University (PWU), an American university where he claims to have obtained his Ph.D. in Development Economics. The article also details information on diploma mills in the U.S. and indicates that a university with the same name is listed "among 550 non-accredited American colleges and universities and colleges offering fake academic papers." The story has been repeated in independent radio broadcasts.

COMMENT

2. (SBU) The article artfully alleged, but did not say, that Mutharika bought his much ballyhooed degree from an American diploma mill. This information, along with the reports of ineptitude and corruption while he led COMESA (reftel C), has been known by opposition leaders and independent media houses for some time. That the stories would surface during the final, critical days of the campaign period appears planned. With the UDF campaigning Mutharika as the solution to Malawi's economic problems, these recent attacks on his credentials have done much to damage Mutharika's credibility, at least among the urban audiences with access to newspapers.
DOUGHERTY